

 **GOVERNMENT OF THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR**

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**TESTIMONY OF  
MAYOR MURIEL BOWSER**

**Before the Subcommittee on Financial Services and General  
Government, Committee on Appropriations,  
U.S. House of Representatives**

**Subcommittee Chairman David Joyce  
Ranking Member Steny Hoyer**

December 10, 2024



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John A. Wilson Building | 1350 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 300 | Washington, DC 20004

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Good afternoon, Chairman Joyce, Ranking Member Hoyer, and members of the House Appropriations Financial Services and General Government Subcommittee.

I am Muriel Bowser, Mayor of Washington, DC. I am joined today by the Chairman of the Council of the District of Columbia Phil Mendelson and the District's Chief Financial Officer Glen Lee.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today to share our economic vision and financial priorities for Washington, DC, which we believe is the best and most beautiful capital city in the world.

With no uncertainty, Washington DC is a well-run city. We navigate the functions of a city, county, school district, and state, complying with the designation of a state in more than 500 federal laws. Our finances are strong, and our 29 consecutive balanced budgets and triple-A bond rating are the envy of mayors and governors across the country. We have a \$21 billion budget which, just like other states, is mostly generated through local revenues. We are a donor state, meaning we pay more to the federal government than we get back. We are a model for our family friendly policies like free pre-K and Paid Family Leave. Our park system is consistently ranked the best in the nation. We have a strong and effective system of school choice and are unique in that our public school enrollment has increased for the past three school years. Crime is trending sharply down, and unlike many of our peer cities, our population is growing.

**The state of the nation's capital is strong and is a beacon of America.**

Our current budget is focused on three priority areas: public safety, education, and our downtown.

- When it comes to ensuring safe communities for our residents, workers, and visitors, DC is putting its money behind proven strategies for reducing crime. We have been laser focused on rebalancing our public safety ecosystem to focus more on accountability. I am pleased to report that violent crime is down 35% compared to last year, with a nearly 50% reduction in carjackings. I am committed to advancing these downward trends. Our local Metropolitan Police Department budget increased by approximately 13%, fully funding the Chief's request for more sworn officers, funding new civilian positions to free up sworn officers to focus on fighting crime, and helping MPD continue on the path toward our long-term goal of 4,000 officers.
- The budget also includes increased funding for DCPS and public charter schools. I am proud to be able to report that the NAEP, otherwise known as the "nation's report card," for public schools shows that for more than a decade, DCPS has remained the single fastest-improving urban school system when it comes to reading, and the third-fastest in math.



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- This budget also makes catalytic investments in our Downtown Action Plan, including more than half a billion dollars to fuel our comeback and keep our basketball and hockey teams where they belong – in Washington, DC.

These investments were guided by a focus on core services and programs that support health and safety. We prioritized programs with a track record of success, and we've aligned our spending with what is needed for long-term sustainability and vitality.

We continue to diversify our economic base through health care, tech, research, education, tourism, and hospitality. I'm proud to share that in 2023, Washington, DC welcomed a record-breaking 25.9 million visitors, demonstrating the resilience and appeal of our great city. Of course, our infrastructure, public safety, utilities, and services support the federal government itself, and we take that responsibility seriously.

We are thankful to you, Chairman Joyce and Ranking Member Hoyer, for your continued commitment to supporting our security and public safety apparatus through the Emergency Planning and Security Fund. This fund reimburses some of the costs associated with supporting the federal government, including the upcoming 60<sup>th</sup> Presidential Inauguration, national security events like the State of the Union and Fourth of July, as well as daily First Amendment activities. We are hopeful that in the final spending bill, we can secure the full \$100 million needed for the District's safety and security.

Additionally, your colleagues in the Senate are considering 10 highly qualified judges to add to the DC Superior Court and the DC Court of Appeals. Our courts are grappling with a significant backlog of cases, directly impacting public safety. By filling these vacancies, the Courts can ensure speedier trials and faster accountability for violent offenders – both critical for the administration of justice and preventing further violence.

As I highlight these areas of collaboration, I must also point out that the District remains burdened by the many policy riders proposed in federal appropriations bills that hold back progress in areas like public safety, criminal justice, and economic development. For example, the potential rider that would not allow us to carry out our Automated Traffic Enforcement (ATE) program could lead to the District losing nearly \$1 billion in total revenue across its four-year financial plan.

Looking ahead, I recognize there are many opportunities for collaboration. I believe our foremost shared priority between the District and this committee is around the success of Downtown DC. It is my belief that the capital city of the most powerful nation in the world should have a vibrant and bustling downtown. While the District has worked diligently and successfully to diversify our economy and workforce, with more than 70% of jobs in the private sector, the federal government



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remains the largest industry sector employer. We strongly support return to office efforts for federal workers. Their presence is vital for DC's economy and provides essential support for small businesses that have been hit hard by remote work policies. Undoubtedly, this will be a benefit to both the vibrancy of our nation's capital and the American people as a whole.

We understand that the need for Federal office space may not be what it once was; however, we believe that it is incumbent upon us to think creatively about repurposing underutilized federal buildings in the heart of our city. These federal spaces have enormous potential for transformation into mixed-use developments—creating new housing options while revitalizing our commercial areas and spurring job growth. For context, Washington, DC currently leads the nation in commercial to residential conversions. The District and the federal government must partner to accelerate the otherwise lengthy disposition process for underutilized property. There are several buildings that we can repurpose now – the James V. Forrestal Building, home of the Department of Energy; the Frances Perkins Building, home of the Department of Labor; and the U.S. Government Accounting Office Building.

By focusing on these areas of collaboration, we can find productive ways to close the space between our city and the federal government and continue to make Washington, DC the best city in the world and a beacon of American strength and resilience.

I am blessed with a sense of optimism, and the strength and resilience of my city and our people give me reason to be optimistic. At the end of the day, most of us want similar things: we want to be able take to care of ourselves and our families, we want safety for our communities, and we want the freedom and opportunities to live up to our God-given potential. We work best when we work together. The partnership between Congress and Washington, DC is essential to ensuring that our capital remains a strong and vibrant city for residents, workers, and visitors while reflecting the very best of our nation.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.